At this point in his narrative Metcalfe introduces a key element, a hitherto unnamed "habit" which he accuses his mother as well as his sister of wanting to "continue" him in. Metcalfe himself seems to connect this "bad habit," which of course is masturbation, to the solitude which, indirectly through poisoning him and rendering him too self-consciously nervous to appear in public, he blames on his relatives. His sister is also responsible in more direct ways:

> I may say that my sister frequently exposed herself in my view, at once showing herself perfectly nude, and yet she never seemed to expect anything in return.

The statement that she "never seemed to expect anything in return" seems to imply that she did not seek sexual intercourse with him, but merely to drive him to masturbation and thereby to madness.

While Metcalfe is able to obtain a "situation" in the city, his "nervousness" increases and he begins to despair, partly because he "cannot account for it." Given some of the ways that wou ld have occurred to the reader by now, it is arguable that there would have been some psychological reasons for the inability to account for his "nervousness." Given that a principal symptom of the disorder appears to be the refusal to acknowledge a great deal of guilt, it is not surprising that he cannot account for it. The failure to account, in the face of all the reasons, appears to be the disease itself.

Metcalfe describes himself avoiding all "public assemblages," sitting always "in some dark corner of the gallery," and often wishing that he was dead. Finally, he had to give his job. Things only deteriorated at home. With his by now customary sensitivity to being seen, he describes how it troubled him that at table his sister always sat where she could see him while not being seen herself.

That fall he fell ill with typhoid fever. He was mainly bothered by a sore throat and, consistent with his hypothesis, diarrhoea. This finally convinced him that he was being poisoned:

> I was thunderstruck. I was surprised I hadn't thought of it before. Naturally I suspected my sister.